

### Should the Olympic programme be revised ?

By Gaston Meyer

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An institution does not last practically a full century without evolving and undergoing changes. Originally, the Olympic programme limited itself to a number of sports, athletics primarily, but also gymnastics, fencing, Graeco-Roman wrestling, shooting, aquatic sports (which included rowing, swimming and yachting), cycling, riding (which was not organized, due to lack of funding), tennis... and cricket.

Today the (Summer) Olympic Games gather twenty-two sports, of which six are team sports.

The risk of gigantism, as it is called, has been relatively restricted thanks to the "organization of preliminary heats or, in timed sports, the establishment of minimum time limits".

For the last twenty years every Olympic sport without exception organizes its own World Championships. In theory no World Championship (in an Olympic sport) should take place during an Olympic year.

Pierre de Coubertin had not planned for the spread of women's sport. He had declared that, according to him, only the *individual male adult* should take part in the Modern Games. May be he would have changed his mind...

Personally, I would like to see the Olympic programme revised approximately every twenty years. Besides, some sports do not deserve to appear on it, water polo, for example, which is relatively little played, and the brutality of which is all the more underhand because, being underwater, it very often escapes the referee's attention.

In a general way, I would like the team sports not to be *imposed* but *suggested* by the organization committee of the city chosen by the IOC. Football (soccer) for example, and even basketball, with their super-professional elite should not be imposed any more than table-tennis, which is a virtually universal sport, as is straight tennis also.

To ensure a favourable vote from the IOC, the host city candidates feel obliged to suggest all of the sports appearing on the programme of the previous Games. Would the IOC not be well-advised to re-establish rule 30 of the 1956 "Olympic Charter" ? This rule differentiated two categories of sports : the compulsory sports and the optional sports. As a matter of fact, one could imagine having, within the context of the Games, but unofficially, team-sports tournaments which would be extended to the whole of the country of the host-city.

From a totally different point of view, the IOC could solemnly confirm that it forbids any ranking by nation in individual sports, with the exception of course of athletics or swimming relay results, or those of rowing, canoeing, kayak or yachting crews.

Within each sport there would be scope for IOC intervention, for example :

*Athletics:* at present there is no true sprint event (50 m), nor a real intermediate race between the 5000 m and the marathon (42 195 m) except for the 10 000 m which duplicates the 5000 m. A 20 km event (which would double for a one-hour race) would be the very thing. The walking event should be kept to a 100 km road-race-which would take place between sunrise and sunset.

*Swimming:* the removal of the different strokes except for backstroke ; the creation of a 50 m event (with individual timing from starting block to finish) and possibly-of an aquatic marathon in the still waters of a lake (10 km for example), two tests which have remained unrecognized up until now.

No doubt the IOC did not possess sufficient technical ammunition to confront the International Federations directly. But ever since the presidency of Lord Killanin - the saviour of the Moscow Games-and that of his successor Juan Antonio Samaranch - the tireless traveller -, the IOC has known how to turn the Olympic Games' increased prestige to the best account. Furthermore, since 1960, thanks to television rights, the IOC has won its independence. Thus a sound Executive Committee has been established in Lausanne. under the direction of Madame Monique Berlioux. Through Olympic Solidarity, it makes an important - contribution to increasing assistance to developing countries. G. M.